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by William J. Magavern

Individualism lies at the core of American culture and law. The liberal model of voluntary interactions between formally equal and independent beings maintains a hold on our national consciousness. This ethic of legal independence emerged in the U.S. during the early and middle years of the nineteenth century. Aside from abolition, temperance was the most important of a myriad of social and economic reform movements, centered on the ideal of self-reliant men unhindered by external constraints, to appear during this age. Ironically, these were crusades that stressed individualism but made their impact felt mainly through group activities.

The creation of the American Temperance Society (ATS) in 1826 heralded the birth of temperance as a major cause among the Northern elite, but the movement did not fully encompass the lower classes until after the 1837 depression and the tremendous effect of Washingtonian temperance associations in the 1840s.[1] Consequently, this examination of temperance in its social, economic and cultural context focuses on the period from the ATS' 1826 founding to the waning of Washingtonianism in the mid-1840s.

At the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century drinking played a major role in American life, as it had for generations. Alcohol appeared regularly in homes, taverns, workplaces and shops, and Americans considered alcoholic drinks the safest and healthiest beverages available. Americans in the early nineteenth century consumed nearly three times the amount of alcohol per capita as they do today. Although such voluminous and regular imbibing had caused little alarm in the eighteenth century, the Jacksonian Era saw major temperance reform movements sweep the North. Consumption dropped precipitously, drinking habits changed dramatically, and temperance became a heated political, religious and social issue.[2]

The shift in attitudes about alcohol and the prominence of the temperance question stemmed from a fundamental transformation in the way many Americans viewed their society and their own roles in society. The battle over temperance pitted a traditional view of a hierarchical preindustrial society, where drinking occurred daily in a context of social interdependence and deference, against a modern conception of a society composed of independent and equal individuals whose moral and material advancement — and the progress of society as a whole — turned on their incorporation of the ascetic values of sobriety, industry and frugality. The clash in worldviews and the changes that it wrought were inextricably linked, as both cause and effect, with the social and economic transformations that marked the Jacksonian Era.

Early temperance efforts found their greatest support in the industrializing towns and cities of the Northeast, especially in New England, the New World home of Puritan ascetic individualism. The spirit of enterprise and acquisition that stimulated the development of commodity production in Northeastern urban areas stressed the need for individuals to be sober and self-disciplined. When hierarchical social and economic relations had dominated the culture (as they still did in the ante-bellum South, which experienced little of the fervor for temperance reform), a whole network of vertical bonds had functioned as a restraint on intemperate behavior. In the traditional context, drinking had usually taken place in controlled settings where community expectations governed behavior.[3] By the late 1820s, however, an emerging consensus favoring egalitarian democracy, along with socioeconomic changes, had already begun to destroy the patterns of deference that had constrained behavior. At the same time, the urbanization and commercialization of society was putting men — drinking was a predominantly male activity — in new environments like the saloons that, unlike traditional taverns, sold liquor by the glass as their main function; in these saloons, also called "grogshops," and in their boardinghouses, men found themselves free of customary community and domestic inhibitions.[4] In a society that increasingly celebrated universal individual independence as an ideal, the source of control of a person's conduct came to be located within the self.

In the 1820s neighborhood segregation by class was growing, as employers moved out of the areas where their businesses were and into new residential middle-class districts.[5] Meanwhile, the neighborhoods they left behind were developing an autonomous working-class culture in which alcohol took a central role. In this unpretentious urban streetlife, men relaxed, talked and drank in saloons and amused themselves with ballrooms and bawdyhouses, cockfighting and bullbaiting, boxing, horse races, traveling circuses and minstrel shows.[6]

Lower-class boisterousness bothered some members of the more "respectable" classes who worried about public drunkenness and connected the saloon life to poverty, crime and other vices.[7] Men of property and standing joined the evangelical clergy in calling on persons of influence to set an example of moderation and self-control.[8] The

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ATS' founders came mainly from the upper crust of traditional society. Predominantly ministers, merchants and professionals, they warned that "every moral and religious principle is dissipated" by the effects of ardent spirits.[9]

Its elitist nature hampered the early temperance movement, as workers frequently resented what they perceived as an imposition by the rich on the independence of the lower class.[10] Indeed, workers had good reason to accuse the early temperance societies of hypocrisy, for the reformers at first neglected to attack the use of wine, which was affordable only to the wealthy, as fervently as they condemned spirits.[11] Their exclusion of wine from the crusade against alcohol may indicate that early temperance advocates were more interested in restricting lower-class behavior than they were in ending drunkenness, but by the mid-1830s most temperance organizations, including the ATS, had taken a radical turn and adopted the principle of total abstinence, dubbed teetotalism.[12]

The reactionary strain present in early temperance societies has led some historians into misinterpreting the major thrust of the sobriety crusade as a narrow, elitist and conservative effort at social control perpetrated by a Federalist patriarchy and clergy trying to reverse its decline in status.[13] It is true that the ranks of the early temperance leaders included advocates of elite hegemony who feared that alcohol would inflame Jacksonian democracy into mob rule by corrupting the virtue that was essential to independent republican citizenship. The influential New England preacher Lyman Beecher appealed to the worst fears of the propertied classes in an 1826 tract:

> When the laboring classes are contaminated, the right of suffrage becomes the engine of destruction . . .. Such is the influence of interest and ambition, fear and indolence that one violent partisan, with a handful of disciplined troops, may overrule the influence of 500 temperance men who are without concert. Already is the disposition to temporize, to tolerate, and even to court the intemperate too apparent on account of the apprehended retribution of their perverted suffrage. . . . As intemperance increases, the power of taxation will come more and more into the hands of men of intemperate habits and desperate fortunes; of course the laws will gradually become subservient to the debtor and less efficacious in protecting the rights of property.[14]

Another argument often advanced to support the theory of temperance as an elitist attempt at social control is that the interests of manufacturers were served by having a sober and well-disciplined workforce.[15] Ample contemporary evidence does demonstrate that some employers indeed used their economic power to push temperance on their employees. A New Hampshire cotton factory forbade "spirituous liquor, smoking, nor any kind of amusement . . . in the workshops, yards or factories" and threatened the "immediate and disgraceful dismissal" of workers found drinking, gambling, or committing "any other debaucheries."[16] A New Jersey iron manufacturer "made a solemn resolution that any person or persons bringing liquor to the work enough to make drunk shall be liable to a fine," and the Hopewell Furnace managers deducted one dollar from pay for intoxication.[17] In Lynn, the Society for the Promotion of Industry, Frugality, and Temperance resolved at its creation in 1826: "let us give employment to such men as use no ardent spirits in preference to others."[18]

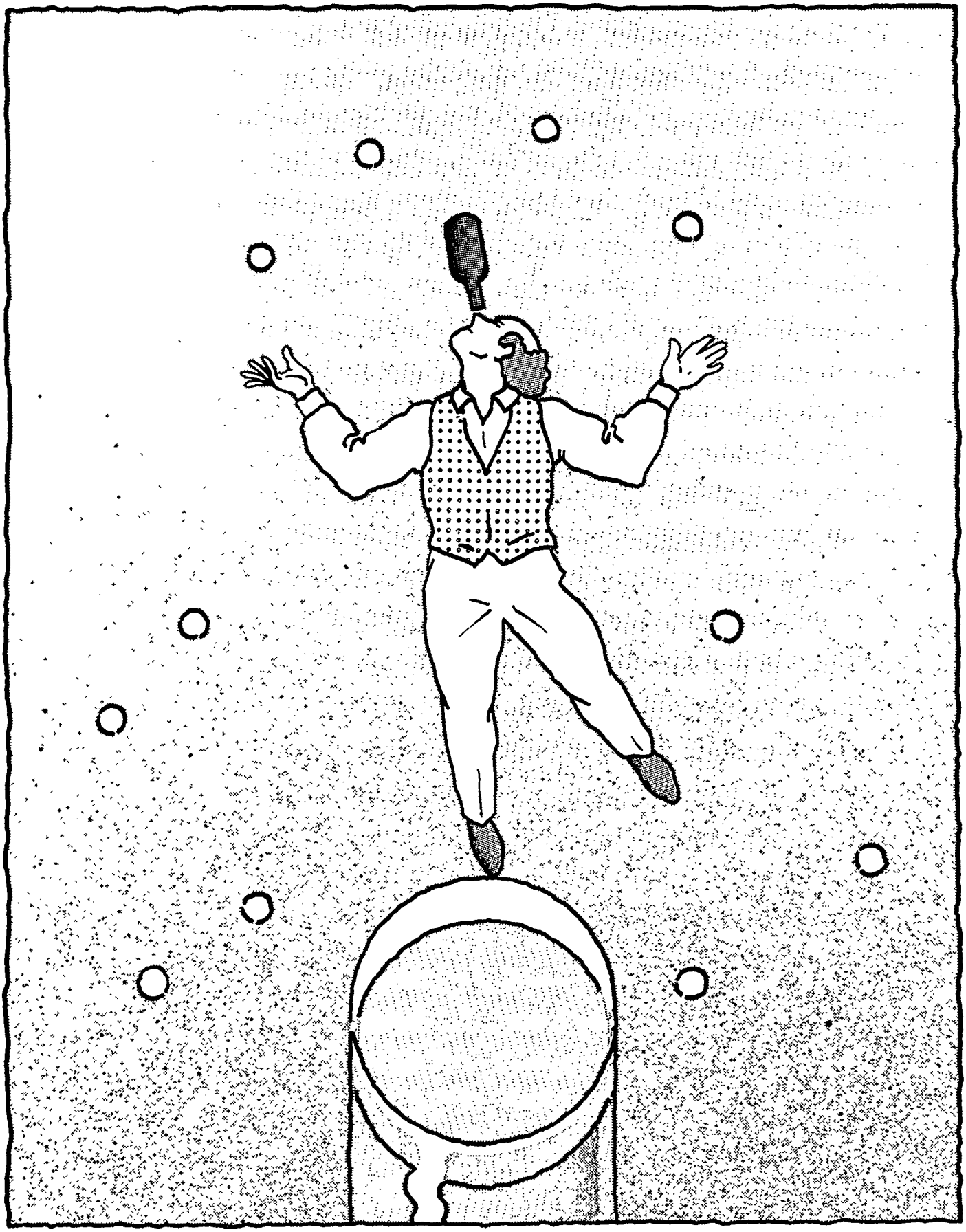
In addition, temperance advocates commonly touted their cause as a means of asserting authority over laborers and increasing their work output.[19] In Rochester, where "worried gentlemen" formed the Rochester Society for the Promotion of Temperance in 1828, "temperance propaganda promised masters social peace, a disciplined and docile labor force, and an opportunity to assert moral authority over their men."[20]

However, to say that the proprietary class saw temperance as beneficial to their material interests tells only part of the story. The reactionary social control theory leaves unanswered the question of why employers had come to perceive a sober workforce as desirable. After all, drinking had been a prominent feature of the working day for as long as anyone could remember, so employers were not predisposed against alcohol. In fact, "the more traditional employers actually encouraged [frequent intoxicating] breaks as part of their paternal respect for 'the Trade'; while some paid their men partly in drink."[21] In the traditional artisanal setting, where a master kept his shop in his own house, drinking may well have increased, rather than decreased, the employer's control, as Paul Johnson suggests:

> Liquor was embedded in the pattern of irregular work and easy sociability sustained by the household economy. . . . Workmen drank with their employers, in situations that employers controlled. The informal mixing of work and leisure and of master and wage earner softened and helped legitimate inequality.[22]

Traditionally, both employers and employees had believed that grog imparted strength, vigor and stamina, and in artisan shops masters and journeymen alike had customarily taken several recesses from toil each day to drink spirits fetched for them by apprentices.[23] To discover, then, why drink came to be viewed as antithetical to productivity one must look beyond the surface assertions that temperance aided proprietors' profits.

The continuing power of traditional beliefs combined with the elitism of the early (pre-1830) temperance movement to make the reformers largely unsuccessful in chang-



ing the lifestyles of urban workers in those first few years. When a shipbuilder in Medford, Massachusetts, denied his men their traditional grog privileges, they simply quit,[24] one instance when temperance proved to be inefficient in advancing the employer's profits. The leading figures of Pawtucket, responding to new organizing activities by mule spinners, requested and received authorization from Rhode Island's General Assembly for more stringent liquor licensing laws, but local opposition prevented implementation of the laws in that mill town.[25] Throughout the towns and cities of the North, saloons and liquor licenses boomed as the autonomous workingman's culture of drinking and rowdy amusements thrived.[26]

But changes were in motion by 1830 that signaled the decline of the traditional view of liquor and the rise of a modern belief in the importance of temperance and self-discipline. Temperance organizing began to spread rapidly, transcending the earlier limitations of the New England elite, and many communities and states formed their own societies with no links to the national ATS leaders, who soon were relegated to a background role.[27]

Related to the new temperance fervor was a revived evangelical enthusiasm that became known as the Second Great Awakening. Unlike the eighteenth-century Great Awakening that told Americans they were "sinners in the hands of an angry God," this new revivalism gave people hope that they could save themselves by reforming. Preachers such as Charles Gradison Finney urged converts to create a heaven here on earth, and the first mission many of the new believers undertook was the abolition of drunkenness. Evangelical Protestantism conveyed the idea that individuals were responsible for their own salvation, that it was in their own power to perfect themselves and their world. Adopting the temperance cause offered the born-again an ideal opportunity to make visible progress toward personal salvation and to bring nearer the millennium by spreading the word.[28]

Both temperance and evangelism participated in a fundamental transformation of the ways in which Americans were experiencing and perceiving their society. Socioeconomic and cultural changes that had been in motion since the American Revolution were accelerating, making the traditional acceptance of workplace drinking in a context of deference and dependence obsolete. The shift in attitudes toward an ethic of responsible individualism affected the way many Americans perceived their interests, resulting in a modern culture of industrial morality that went hand in hand with the rise of industrial capitalism. The interplay between economic and cultural causes and effects is complex and dynamic and difficult to delineate precisely, but, as E.P. Thompson has said, "there is no such thing as economic growth which is not, at the same time, growth or change of a culture."[29]

During the Age of Jackson, profound changes in the social relations of production were accompanied by struggles over the meaning of the republican ideals that Americans had shared since the Revolution. A rough consensus existed on the four inter-locking concepts of republicanism (as delineated by J.G.A. Pocock): preservation of the public good, or *commonwealth; virtue*, the subordination of private ends to the public good; active *citizenship*, necessary to preclude tyranny; and each citizen's *independence* of the political will of others. In the Jacksonian Era, holders of divergent views battled over the interpretive content to be given to these cultural concepts and over the question of whether or not *equality*, in the liberal democratic sense, would also meet agreement as a fundamental ideal.[30] Traditionalists opposed egalitarian democracy and universal manhood suffrage because they retained the eighteenth-century notion that true citizenship and independence could be exercised only by men holding a sufficient amount of property. Modernists, on the other hand, believed that each individual was independent, for each had property in his own labor, and that liberal democracy would promote citizenship and safeguard against tyranny. While traditionalists conceived of a hierarchy of social relationships and interdependence as the best means of preserving virtue and the public good, modernists wanted to break from traditions of deference and protect the commonwealth and virtue by making each individual free, equal and self-responsible. Out of modernism came the plethora of nineteenth-century reform movements that sought to enhance individual autonomy and self-control.

Around the same time as traditional ideas about republicanism were being challenged by a strengthening of the egalitarian impulse that had been present in American culture since the Revolution, the age-old mode of urban production — the small craft shop — was also facing change. In the traditional artisanal system, a master craftsman headed an operation oriented to limited markets and based on skilled work with hand tools. The master employed apprentices whom he trained in the skills of the trade and supported in his household, as well as journeymen who often lived near or in the master's household, which frequently held the shop. The craftsmen all worked together and drank together, and they were all part of a family; the master, as head of the household/family, was responsible for all those under his roof, employees as well as kin.[31] When a covenant at Rochester's First Presbyterian Church told heads of households that they were "under solemn obligations to restrain their children and dependents . . . from all sinful and unlawful amusements," the householders understood that resident wage earners were included in the category of "dependents."[32]

During the 1830s numerous shops still organized themselves in the time-honored way, but others had abandoned the household system, especially in the faster-growing trades in the more rapidly developing urban areas. Masters ceased doing manual work and became full-time businessmen who left the shop premises and increased the pace and scale of production. The reasons for these changes are unclear — perhaps the new availability of credit, cheap labor and regional markets had an effect,

along with new attitudes about independence and free labor — but it is evident that the new practices altered the employment relationship. Masters, rather than personally training apprentices, began to hire young men with whom they shared no obligations other than the contractual. The hierarchical network of interdependence was dissolving into an aggregation of discrete individuals, each one responsible for his own conduct. Journeymen, whether out of necessity or because they no longer saw themselves as being dependent, moved out of the shops and into boardinghouses in their own neighborhoods, where they worked on material that was sent out to them.[33]

Although some factories were operating before the Civil War, the primary mode of commodity production remained artisanal. Reorganization of the craft economy, however, was transforming the social relations of production, and both those relations and cultural attitudes were already taking on the characteristics of industrial capitalism. Consolidation of production into larger units drove small employers out of business, forcing dislocated masters and journeymen into sweatshops and "manufactories" (large industrial establishments without machine power) where they worked alongside unskilled workers, often poor women and children, who had been hired because they were the least-expensive hands. These dislocated skilled workers found that their status and their wages were declining, and that the traditional support structure of the craft shop had disappeared, leaving each individual to rely on himself.[34]

At the same time, those master mechanics who had succeeded in establishing themselves as entrepreneurs in the competitive economy frequently attributed their success to self-reliance and self-discipline. As the household bonds that had tied employers and employees together in a set of reciprocal duties and responsibilities waned, traditional dependence was perceived as undesirable, even sinful, in many quarters.[35] Regular drinking, which had participated in the social web of dependence, was cast off by those who adopted a modern understanding of independence. An independent man had to have control over himself in two ways — he had to be free of the external restraints imposed by the traditional social order, and he had to be sober and virtuous, since his progress could come only from his own exertions, not from external aid.[36] The Massachusetts Young Man's Temperance Convention stated this modern understanding: "We must, unaided, work out our own character . . . our own destiny."[37] Whether one was a wage earner hoping for upward mobility, as most of those young temperance organizers were, or a proprietor who already had accumulated some capital, both moral and material advancement turned on individual control, according to this attitude, and no one who depended on alcohol could be in control of his life.

Individualism and self-restraint did not spring suddenly from out of the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. In fact, the eighteenth-century republican ideal had placed high values on virtue and independence. What had changed was the social and cultural setting in which those values operated. During the preindustrial era, individualism had been incorporated into a pattern of deference to one's superiors, "but in the new setting individualism was alloyed with a belief in equality of opportunity."[38] The gradually-occurring full realization of American republicanism's egalitarian ideal, stimulated by and providing an ideological framework for the rise of industrial capitalism, destroyed and discredited the old paternalistic forms that had constrained the values of frugality, industry and temperance in the preindustrial age.[39]

The ethic of self-improvement, which included sobriety, thrift, hard work and education, was unleashed by the individualism and autonomy that the industrial culture prized. When entrepreneurs advocated temperance they did see a sober workforce as in their interests, indeed, but it was their cultural attitudes that supplied the terms and images they used to define those interests. As republicans, often holding evangelical beliefs, they wished for both personal achievement and the advancement of the commonwealth, and they believed a society of competitive individuals instilled with the virtues of sobriety and industry could best attain spiritual and economic progress.[40] Often crediting their own upward mobility to their temperate habits, many rising entrepreneurs sincerely hoped others would reach similar attainment, so they campaigned for temperance.[41]

Large numbers of employers came to temperance after their conversion to evangelical revivalism. After Finney's crusade had transformed Rochester, "Christian employers announced that only sober, God-fearing applicants need knock at their doors," grocery warehouse owners smashed barrels of whiskey on the sidewalk, and a large ship was built by a dry workforce.[42] Although many evangelicals were not temperate and temperance did spread beyond its evangelical base, the milieu in which temperance advocacy most frequently appeared during the '30s was as a means of bringing God's Kingdom into existence on earth. This millennialist faith in human perfectibility and progress encouraged a break with the more static vision of traditional society. Rather than having both their spiritual and secular status foreordained by forces beyond their control, modernists believed they could progress personally and societally in the material and moral realms. Progress would flow, they believed, from the voluntary efforts of formally equal individuals liberated from dependence on vicious habits and paternalism. So individuals, freed from the bonds of hierarchy, faced both responsibility and opportunity. A man's future depended not on a patron or a capricious God, but on his own ability to control himself.

Bolstered by revivalism and by the growing acceptance of the idea of independent labor, temperance became a force that shook whole communities, drawing support not from any one socio-economic class, but from people in various situations who were willing, for differing reasons, to make a break with tradition. Recent research by social

historians reveals the cultural divisions that separated temperance advocates from detractors.

An 1835 controversy over a proposed ban on licenses for the sale of bottled spirits in Worcester, Massachusetts, demonstrates the rift in attitudes. Employers of labor in the manufacturing sector, many of whom had stopped drinking and also ceased paying workers in spirits, were clearly against liquor sales; master mechanics and manufacturers reported that, contrary to previous opinion, their workmen paid more attention to their work and actually performed more labor when they were not under the influence. Opposition to the liquor ban came from employers tied to the mercantile economy such as grocers, hoteliers and importers. Some in this latter group undoubtedly had direct pecuniary interests in the sale of alcohol, but it is very telling that most of Worcester's lawyers opposed prohibition, fearing that it would "upset the orderly process of justice and create more social and legal problems than it would solve." The pro-license men above all desired to preserve social harmony, and they considered a regulated system of licenses more sensible than outright prohibition, which would drive the liquor business into the hands of shady characters. Many of them were socially prominent men who had supported moderate temperance reform as a curb on drunkenness, but opposed legal coercion because it threatened the traditional customs and institutions that supported their own social rank. The foes of prohibition were far more likely than its advocates to use a ceremonial title, usually a military rank.

The prohibitionists, on the other hand, respected innovation and turned their backs on tradition. Many of them had won reputations as innovative manufacturers, and they were more likely than their opponents to belong to self-improvement organizations like lyceums, mechanics' institutes and public libraries. While Worcesterites wedded to traditional patterns of conduct and attitude opposed prohibition, those who strove for new knowledge and started new enterprises led the fight to ban licenses.[43]

Evidence from other Northern areas confirms that temperance found support wherever modern attitudes and economies were most pervasive, while it lagged in those sectors most tied to nineteenth-century structures and views. In New York State, temperance was well-received in manufacturing towns and among the urban middle classes of prosperous and developed communities along the Erie Canal — Rochester, Utica, Troy, Syracuse and Oswego — but not in the underdeveloped counties or the commercial centers of Buffalo and Albany.[44] In New York City, manufacturers formed a temperance society ten years before merchants did, and the mechanics' General Society devoted itself to leading apprentices toward sobriety and industry.[45] In Eastern Massachusetts, temperance was strongest in the rising manufacturing and farming towns, and weakest in the port cities.[46] Although farmers are not the focus of this paper, it is notable that among farmers the division over the Worcester license question fell not along lines of wealth or land, but on their differing approaches to farming. The prohibitionist farmers were often described as "enterprising" or "resourceful," and displayed a taste for acquisition and innovation, while the anti-prohibitionist tillers, though no less wealthy, showed less interest in either acquisition or improvement.[47]

Like the higher classes, workers tended to separate into traditionalists, who opposed temperance, and modernists, who welcomed it.[48] The traditionalists, or "Boys of Pleasure" as Bruce Laurie has dubbed them, held onto their preindustrial values and lifestyle, refusing to give up their "casual attitudes toward work, their pursuit of happiness in gaming and drinking, and the raucous revelry that accompanied fire and militia musters."[49] Unconcerned with equality, they willingly deferred to the paternalistic authority of the propertied class, but expected in return a ration of rum and a "Blue Monday" off from work.[50] Traditionalists tended to come from the American and European countrysides, where the hold of the old ways was still strong.[51] They expected to imbibe while at work and clung tenaciously to their customary notions about the value of grog for both intoxicating and medicinal purposes.[52]

Working-class modernists, who favored the temperance cause, appear to fall into two general categories or ideal-types. Laurie calls one group "the revivalists," a type that shares many characteristics with the group Alan Dawley and Paul Faler have named "loyalists." Though Laurie stresses the religious element more, what is important is that these workers avoided the issue of class conflict.[53] Rarely joining the labor movement, they preferred to incorporate the evangelical Protestant morality of their employers as a means to personal advancement, attributing poverty and other working-class ills not to systemic inequality but to individual flaws.[54] Faced with the disruption of the traditional artisanal economy, they "joined the ranks of the pious and temperate, finding in personal discipline and improvement the best means to gain self-respect and to adjust to new conditions," they "wore their sobriety and literacy as badges of middle-class respectability."[55]

The other group of modernist workers did form a labor movement and promote the interests of their class by establishing unions, co-operatives, newspapers, workingmen's parties and central labor councils.[56] Dubbed "rebels" by Dawley and Faler, these laborers "saw sobriety and literacy as matters of self- pride and as means to proclaim their independence from the external commands of employer and liquor."[57] Far from seeing temperance as an imposition by the elite, these skilled workers used the new industrial morality to defend their class interests and secure their independence as free laborers.[58] Laurie calls them "radicals, Tom Paine's progeny," because they drew on Paine's legacy of radical egalitarian republicanism.[59] Rationalists, deists and universalists, they scorned evangelicalism for its middle-class piety and compared the

tyranny of the clerics to that of George III. These artisans of small means aspired only to a competency, not upward mobility. Expressing the anti-capitalist version of the republican ideal, their concerns about inequality, competition and dependency were shaped by the labor theory of value. As productive workers, the rebels believed that they alone created wealth and they should take collective action to gain their rightful place as leaders of the commonwealth.[60]

Eager to diverge from the traditional society that seemed to them to rely on deference and superstition, the radicals adopted temperance as a means of escaping psychological and economic dependence and moving toward the dignity of the free laborer. Labor organizing and radical politics could never hope to succeed while wage earners remained drinking and gaming in saloons; manual workers would never rise to independence while in the thrall of grog.[61] Consequently, journeymen's societies often forbade frequent intoxication and required discipline as they asserted the wage earner's right to some control over his work.[62]

The Ten-Hour Circular of 1835 expresses how working-class organizers felt about the place of alcohol in the class struggle — it was one of the means of enslaving workers.[63] The document, written by Boston carpenters, stonecutters and masons (trades that were heavily represented in the ranks of Boston temperance informers who helped arrest liquor-law violators a few years later)[64] to elicit support for their strike for a ten-hour day, includes this blast at employers:

> excessive labor has been the immediate cause of more intemperance than all other causes combined . . . the cause of Temperance never will prevail until slavery among Mechanics shall cease from this land. . . . It is not a long period since some of our opposers made it a rule to furnish a half pint of ardent spirits to each man, every day, for no other purpose than to urge the physical powers to excessive exertion; thank God, those days have passed away, but they will ever remain a foul blot on the pages of History. . . . We claim by the blood of our fathers, shed on our battlefields in the War of the Revolution, the rights of American Freemen . . . the God of the Universe has given us time, health and strength. We utterly deny the right of any man to dictate to us how much of it we shall sell.[65]

This portion of the Circular demonstrates not only that its authors knew how to appeal to the public by using vivid images drawn from the Revolution and the temperance movement, but also their deep sense of independence as free Americans and as owners of their own labor. Republicanism to them meant equality of opportunity based on control of their own bodies and work. These radical artisans envisioned an egalitarian democratic society where independent men labored industriously for the good of the individual and the commonwealth.[66] As increases in the scale and pace of production disrupted the craft workers' lives and threatened their independence, the rebels "combined their dislike of enslavement to drink with a dislike of enslavement to the capitalist accumulators."[67]

The economic panic of 1837 and the severe depression that ensued and lasted for years thereafter shattered the radical artisans' dream of a workingman's democracy and altered the nature of the temperance movement. In the major cities of New York, Philadelphia and Boston, the active and organized workers' movements that had been established could not survive a depression that threw a large segment of their constituency out of work and threatened others with the spectre of dependency and pauperism.[68]

Faced with an economic disaster they did not comprehend, Americans turned to individual, rather than structural, explanations for their problems. Workingmen turned in mass numbers from the collective solutions of labor organizations to individual self-help and self-improvement.[69] Evangelical ministers told now-vulnerable workers that social problems stemmed from individual sins and that hard times represented divine retribution for human depravity.[70] Not surprisingly, the temperance crusade boomed, and its tenor among the lower class changed.

After 1837, temperance societies tailored to the needs and interests of the common folk arose for the first time.[71] Temperance-beneficial societies dominated by journeymen and unskilled workers offered material comfort, not just moral advice, to the victims of the slack economy.[72] Despite the element of mutual protection offered by these societies, though, hopes for improvement focused on the individual. More than ever before, temperance campaigners demanded that their converts sign a pledge of total abstinence from drinking. The extreme step of adopting teetotalism represented in the minds of many a way for an individual to take control of his life and assert his self-worth in the face of a threatening economy.[73] Although the worker could not alter the economy, abstinence was something he *could* do to improve his situation.

Although the depression ruined working-class radicalism, the cultural division between modernists and traditionalists remained a source of social conflict. Confronted by trying times, some wage earners sought in abstinence an avenue to security and possibly upward mobility. Others sought refuge in their customary escape valves — drinking and rowdy amusements — and reacted violently to attacks on their saloon culture.[74]

The rift between traditionalists and modernists erupted into major social strife in Boston after the passage of the "15 Gallon Law" prohibiting the sale of alcohol in smaller amounts. After 17,361 signatures were presented favor-

ing repeal of the law, 64,684 were collected against repeal. When enforcement of the new law began on April 1, 1839, temperance supporters entered grog shops as informants and made arrests when they were served. After a conviction in a packed courthouse, one mob tried to destroy a temperance man's store, and another mob beat, tarred and feathered an informer.[75]

Jill Dodd's comparative analysis of the composition of the opposing groups — on one side, the informers who testified against liquor sellers, and on the other side, those who were arrested as members of the mobs or who testified for those defendants — reveals no major class differences. The informers did have more professionals and manufacturers among their ranks, and the anti-temperance mobs did have more unskilled workers, but both groups were primarily composed of propertyless journeymen. Differences related to beliefs and values stand out more than class distinctions. The temperance informers were more likely than their opponents to belong to a church (particularly an evangelical church) or voluntary association, more likely to live in a new neighborhood away from the old waterfront commercial district, and ten years later, were more likely to have risen in occupational status and property acquisition.[76] In a time when individual autonomy and reform movements centered on self-improvement were replacing traditional ideas about hierarchical social interdependence, those who adopted the ethic of self-reliant individualism seem to have prospered more than those who declined to.

Traditionalism continued to fade as working-class temperance found its own national voice in the enormously popular Washingtonian movement. Sweeping Northern cities after its founding by six reformed drinkers in Baltimore in 1840, Washingtonianism emphasized persuasion instead of the coercion that had sparked social unrest.[77] Like the temperance-beneficial societies, Washingtonian groups gave comfort to the drunk and destitute in a brotherly way and provided material aid in addition to moral suasion. Often indifferent to religion, Washingtonians provided the poor with food, clothing and alternative forms of entertainment to wean them away from the bottle.[78]

The widespread popularity of Washingtonianism demonstrates both the triumph of modern attitudes and the shortcomings of the theory that temperance was imposed on the lower classes by the wealthy. As Dodd points out, "working people were not simply malleable lumps of humanity, to be thrown on the wheel and shaped according to the values and fears of their betters. Many workingmen wholeheartedly embraced the new way of life the moral reformers were advocating."[79] An egalitarian movement of, by and for the lower and lower-middle classes, Washingtonianism aimed to promote the dignity and independence of the individual, stressing self-discipline and education along with total abstinence.[80]

Though Washingtonianism left a legacy of lower-class self- help and mutuality, it, like the temperance-beneficial societies, played down class conflict in favor of social harmony. The emphasis on temperance as a road to wealth and the image of sober manly self-respect projected by the movement reinforced the idea that the workers' distress was caused not by structural economic and political forces but by personal dependence on alcohol.[81] By making total abstinence the answer to the endemic problems of poverty and unemployment, the Washingtonians deflected attention away from the class-based causes of the wage laborers' difficulties. Although the Washingtonians themselves ceased to play a central role after the mid-1840s, modern individualism emerged triumphant as temperance associations participated in the process of socializing the young. Young men were taught to incorporate the self-controlled character traits they needed to compete in an economy based on free labor, and young women were taught to use gentle, nurturing ways to persuade their men not to drink.[82]

By the mid-'40s the temperance movement had succeeded in taking a socially accepted custom and making it unacceptable in most quarters of Northern urban society.[83] The transformation in attitudes became ever more apparent as the now-ascendant modernist temperance advocates continued to attack traditional culture, especially when it was the culture of immigrants.[84] Temperance continued to draw support from people and towns that had departed from traditional ways and views, that used the banks, railroads and canals of the modern commercial society, and associated themselves with progress, optimism and opportunity.[85]

But the ethic of self-reliant individualism that temperance promoted and benefited from assured that only some Americans would share in the progress and opportunities envisioned by the optimistic reformers. The kind of independence embraced by an ideology that disdained the preindustrial system of reciprocal duties and responsibilities might make the individual a more disciplined worker, but it could do nothing to prevent the nationwide depressions that periodically threw millions out of work, drunk or sober. When temperance advocates addressed the problem of poverty, they downplayed the importance of low wages and banking and trade policies, offering only one solution: "Unite with us in abstaining from all intoxicating drinks."[86] Now that dependence on others was condemned,[87] and the artisan radicalism that had encouraged a measure of class-conscious collective action had waned, the possibility of working-class unity and organizing grew dim. The cultural gap that divided workers with modern views from traditionalists, such as immigrants, inhibited unity, while the ethic of self-reliance discouraged workers from joining together to fight poverty and oppression. Not only did abstinence fail to fulfill its advocates' promise that it would cure all social problems, but the temperance movement also made the resolution of problems rooted in inequality more difficult by advancing the view that individual vices caused poverty.

Out of the clash of cultures arose a conception of republican society as composed of autonomous and equal individuals. This liberal democracy could maintain both liberty and order, the new morality contended, as long as individuals incorporated the controls that, in traditional society, had been embedded in a network of hierarchical social relations. Thus, the temperance movement contributed to and derived strength from the individualist modern ideology that was emerging triumphant in the antebellum North and would reach its apex after the Civil War. That ideology retains significant force today.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jed Dannenbaum, Drink and Disorder 16-17 (1984).
2. *Id.* at 3, 8.
3. *Id.* at 4-5.
4. *Id.* at 5; Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millenium 58 (1978).
5. Johnson at 57; Dannenbaum at 5.
6. Johnson at 58, 82; Susan E. Hirsch, Roots of the American Working Class 104 (1978).
7. Hirsch at 104; Dannenbaum at 5; Paul G. Faler, Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution 114 (1981).
8. Dannenbaum at 19; Ian R. Tyrell, Sobering Up 54 (1979).
9. Tyrell at 70; Dannenbaum at 19.
10. Hirsch at 104; Bruce Laurie, Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850 41 (1980).
11. Dannenbaum at 3; Tyrell at 107.
12. Tyrell at 135.
13. For this interpretation, *see* Joseph R. Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade (1963). For a critique of the way historians have used the concept of social control to explain the motives of Jacksonian reformers, *see* Lawrence Frederick Kohl, *The Concept of Social Control and the History of Jacksonian Emerica*, 5 Journal of the Early Republic 21 (1985).
14. Lyman Beecher, Six Sermons on Intemperance 57-58 (1843).
15. Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic 282 (1984).
16. Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society 19 (1966).
17. *Id.* at 19-20, 21.
18. Alan Dawley, Class and Community 36 (1976).
19. Tyrell at 106-107.
20. Johnson at 79-83.
21. Wilentz at 54.
22. Johnson at 57.
23. Dannenbaum at 2.
24. Gutman at 20.
25. Gary B. Kulik, *Patterns of Resistance to Industrial Capitalism, Pawtucket Village and the Strike of 1824*, in American Workingclass Culture 228 (Milton Cantor ed. 1979).
26. Johnson at 82; Wilentz at 53; Hirsch at 104.
27. Dannenbaum at 20; Tyrell at 87.
28. The analysis of the connection between evangelicalism and temperance in this paragraph draws on Johnson and Tyrell.
29. Edward P. Thompson, *Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism*, 38 Past and Present 97 (1967).
30. Wilentz at 14.
31. This discussion of changes in artisan life is based on Laurie, Johnson, and Wilentz.
32. Johnson at 43-44.
33. *See* note 31.
34. *Id.*
35. Tyrell at 126-127; Johnson at 141.
36. Tyrell at 141.
37. *Id.*
38. Alan Dawley and Paul Faler, *Working-Class Culture and Politics in the Industrial Revolution: Sources of Loyalism and Rebellion*, 9 Journal of Social History 466-467 (1976).
39. *Id.* at 467.
40. Tyrell at 125.
41. Tyrell at 7.
42. Johnson at 113-114, 121-122.
43. The information on temperance in Worcester comes from Tyrell at 97-102.
44. Tyrell at 114; *see also* Johnson; and Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class (1981).
45. Tyrell at 114; Wilentz at 40.
46. Tyrell at 113.
47. *Id.* at 102-104.
48. Some manual workers belonged to the middle class because they were master craftsmen with substantial property, but the term "workers" here refers to wage earners and small- scale masters who employed only a few journeymen at most and never lived far from the line that kept them from becoming wage earners themselves.
49. Laurie at 54; Dawley and Faler at 468.
50. Dawley and Faler at 468.
51. Laurie at 56-57.
52. *Id.* at 54.
53. *Id.* at 52; Dawley and Faler at 469-470.
54. Laurie at 52.
55. Dawley and Faler at 469; Wilentz at 46.
56. Dawley and Faler at 470.
57. *Id.* at 469.
58. Jill Siegel Dodd, *The Working Classes and the Temperance Movements in Ante-Bellum Boston*, 19 Labour History 510-511 (1978).
59. Laurie at 75; Jim Green, *Culture, Politics and Workers' Response to Industrialization in the United States*, 16 Radical America 114 (1982).
60. Laurie at 75-80.
61. Green at 114; Wilentz at 255.
62. Wilentz at 58-59.
63. Dodd at 530.
64. *Id.*
65. 6 A Documentary History of American Industrial Society 97-99 (John R. Commons *et al.* eds. 1910).
66. Wilentz at 95.
67. Dodd at 530.
68. *Id.* at 510-511; Wilentz at 306-308; Laurie at 122; David Montgomery, *The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots of 1844*, 5 Journal of Social History 420-421 (1972).
69. Montgomery at 421; Dodd at 510-511; Laurie at 118.
70. Dodd at 510-511; Laurie at 118.
71. *Id.*; Laurie at 119-120.
72. Laurie at 120.
73. Dodd at 512; Tyrell at 169.
74. Dodd at 512.
75. Dodd at 514-519.
76. *Id.* at 522-529.
77. Tyrell at 161.
78. Wilentz at 308.
79. Dodd at 510.
80. Wilentz at 308; Montgomery at 421.
81. Wilentz at 314; Ryan at 135.
82. Ryan at 140, 142.
83. Tyrell at 4.
84. Laurie at 123; Hirsch at 104.
85. W.J. Rorabaugh, *Prohibition as Progress: New York State's License Elections, 1846*, 14 Journal of Social History 432- 435 (1981).
86. Tyrell at 129-130.
87. Johnson at 141; Kohl at 32.